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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Misión Mujer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

The effectiveness of development efforts in reaching every person rightly preoccupies the thoughts of members of global civil society. Different strategies and actions have been applied in order to address the Millennium Development Goals as the principal measures of progress. Nevertheless, it seems as if the efforts have not been sufficient or adequate enough: are we hitting the key challenges in achieving equity and integral development for all?

The development agenda clearly targets the most pressing development issues, from poverty reduction, health, employment and education to human rights, sustainable development, finance and effective governance. All of these issues are important, but are there specific cross-cutting issues that, if dealt with successfully, may generate a positive impact on all of them?

The transcendent cross-cutting issue that immediately affects the other development issues is education. Universal and equitable access to quality education is integral to all the efforts to eradicate poverty, as well as to generating a domino effect on solving the majority of the problems occurring in every country, in particular developing ones. It is undeniable that all the goals and the activities proposed to achieve quality education for every person will require short-, middle- and long-term investment; nevertheless, we think this is the only effective path to find a clear response to such urgent matters as violence, drugs and HIV/AIDS. The engagement and participation of civil society in cooperation with Governments in order to make progress on this issue is vital.

The second cross-cutting issue is the promotion of a more integral gender perspective. This obviously means including women, but also male issues in the development agenda. Men, as well as women, also suffer from stereotyped models of what it "means to be a man", such as those that glorify violence, criminal behaviour, unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse and even suicide. The consequences of the crisis of masculinity are pronounced and also have a negative impact on women. Among men, there is also a lack of: sense of belonging, respectable level of income, and economic and recreational opportunities, especially for young men. Important commentators have noted that frustration and anger over the unequal distribution of opportunities are breeding grounds for violence and that gender identity is clearly as much an issue for men as it is for women. For that reason, women's empowerment should not mean the disempowerment of men. Gender is relational, and both issues are consequential for development. As experience has demonstrated, interventions directed at women are not always as effective if they do not have men's cooperation. Therefore, if we want to end the gender inequities that especially affect developing countries, a more comprehensive, male-inclusive gender paradigm should be promoted through international policies and actions. Gender mainstreaming funds should also target men, including by engaging them in primary health care or in specialized reproductive and sexual health clinics, by creating media campaigns to promote positive images of men involved in their children's lives, and by promoting HIV/AIDS programmes.